

**Minutes**  
**Western Piedmont Council of Governments**  
**Bimonthly Policy Board Meeting**  
**Tuesday, July 27, 2021**  
**City of Newton Fire Department Headquarters, Newton, NC**

**Members Present:**

Bob Floyd, Jr., Chair  
Johnny Berry, Secretary  
George Holleman, Treasurer  
Barbara Pennell, Past Chair  
Chip Black, At-Large  
Wayne Abele, At-Large  
Joseph L. Gibbons, At-Large  
Larry Yoder  
Johnnie Carswell, Alternate  
Ronnie Setzer  
Donald Robinson  
Joie Fulbright  
Dennis Anthony  
Dr. Caryl Burns  
Mike Smith, Alternate  
Larry Chapman  
Jim Engelman, Alternate  
Marla Thompson  
Chris Jernigan  
Jerry Hodge  
Allen Spencer  
Kendra Edwards, Alternate  
Gary McClure  
Andy Thompson, Alternate  
Amparo Alfaro  
Helen Chestnut  
Erisha Lipford

**Members Absent:**

Jill Patton, Vice-Chair  
Kitty Barnes, At-Large  
James Weaver  
Mike Labrose  
Dale Sherrill  
Sheila Perkins  
Keith Warren

**Local Government/Agency:**

Cedar Rock  
Connelly Springs  
Taylorsville  
Gamewell  
Valdese  
Burke County  
Lenoir  
Alexander County  
Burke County  
Cajah's Mountain  
Catawba  
Conover  
Drexel  
Granite Falls  
Hildebran  
Hudson  
Hudson  
Long View  
Morganton  
Newton  
Rhodhiss  
Rhodhiss  
Rutherford College  
Valdese  
Appointed  
Appointed  
Appointed  
  
Hickory  
Catawba County  
Brookford  
Caldwell County  
Claremont  
Glen Alpine  
Sawmills

Randy Burns	Appointed
Tommy Luckadoo	Appointed
Malla Vue	Appointed
Jeanna Price	Appointed

**Guests/Others Present:**

Donald Duncan, Conover  
Mary Carter, Gamewell  
Sherri Bradshaw, Drexel  
Randy Feierabend, Cahah's Mountain  
Scott Hildebran, Lenoir  
Ivey Robinson  
Kenneth Geathers, Rutherford College  
Tamra Brooks, Connelly Springs  
Elizabeth Krige, Catawba  
Jon Greer, Hudson  
Ed Sain, Newton  
John Stiver, Newton

**WPCOG Staff Present:**

Anthony Starr, Executive Director  
Sherry Long, Assistant Executive Director/Director of Community & Economic Development  
Ashley Bolick, Director of Administrative Services and Human Resources  
Andrea Roper, Finance Director  
Wendy Johnson, Director of Workforce Development  
Alison Adams, Director of Community & Regional Planning  
Jason Toney, Communications Specialist

**Call to Order/Welcome**

A regular meeting of the WPCOG Policy Board was called to order at 6:45 pm by Chair Bob Floyd. Chair Floyd thanked the City of Newton for hosting. City of Newton Policy Board Delegate Jerry Hodge welcomed the Policy Board to Newton.

**Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Minutes of the previous meeting were considered. Mr. Joie Fulbright made a motion to approve minutes from the May 25, 2021 meeting and Mr. Larry Chapman offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

**Unfinished Business/Reports**

There was no unfinished business.

## **New Business**

### EDA Cares Act Grant Update – NC Foothills Experience

Ms. Alison Adams, WPCOG Director of Community and Regional Planning, provided an update to the board on the EDA Cares Act Grant project, NC Foothills Experience. The initial name for this project was “The Storybook Map”, but it has been re-named to “The NC Foothills Experience.” This name was created because of the notable presence of foothills found throughout the region. We feel that the word “experience” can be applied region-wide. For example, it is our hope that stakeholders will use the word “experience” when marketing themselves (Experience insert - town/city/county/organization).

The purpose of the project is to highlight the opportunities and places within the region that enhance our quality of life. The project will help engage and attract workforce talent, industries and business to the region. The purpose also aligns with the COG’s goals in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

Successful industries locate in areas where employees want to live, work and play. By locating in these areas, companies save money by avoiding the cyclical pattern of hiring, rehiring and training. The NC Foothills Experience tool will allow businesses/corporations (future and current) to have quick access to information that can be used to attract and retain employees. All of the locations shown in the tool will be further marketed by linking directly to each stakeholder’s website. Stakeholders will also display the NC Foothills Logo on their sites along with a link to the tool. This tool quickly and easily provides access to the four main areas of focus discussed below. Drone footage, photos, and written descriptions of each location will enable users to learn more with just a few clicks.

The four main areas of focus across the region are – Outdoor Adventures (parks, trails, boat access and biking), Fun Places (cultural amenities – museums, libraries, festivals, and downtowns), Farm Fresh (local sources of food – farmers markets, u-pick farms/roadside stands and butchers) and Cool Spaces (wineries, breweries, distilleries, bike shops and outfitters). Since the beginning of the grant cycle we have concentrated on the project’s Outdoor Adventures and Fun Places focus areas. Staff met with almost every stakeholder within the region to obtain feedback and ideas. Stakeholders are providing photos with credits and have suggested additional locations to include.

The project’s branding/logo is being developed and is slated to be complete by late fall. The color scheme and logo will coordinate with a majority of the logos found within the region. We would like to complement the current and future initiatives each stakeholder is involved in and not duplicate efforts. The feedback received from stakeholders has been nothing but positive and the project has been praised for its regional approach. Through continued partnership and collaboration, we feel strongly this project will be successful.

The next steps are as follows:

Farm Fresh (September 2021)

Cool Spaces (January 2022)

Release Date/Event (TBD)

WIOA Plan Summary, Program Year 2021-2022

Ms. Wendy Johnson, Workforce Development Board Director, presented the WIOA Plan Summary for program year 2021-2022. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires each Workforce Development Board (WDB) to develop and submit, in partnership with the local chief elected official, a comprehensive four-year plan. The four-year plan were last submitted in June 2020. Annually, each WDB is to provide updates to the Comprehensive Four-Year Plan (PY 2020-24). The WIOA Program Year (PY) 2021 Plan is to provide current information and be effective July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022 and will include all current local policies. The PY2021 Plan Summary was made available for 30 days for public comment. No comments were submitted by the public, therefore, board staff submitted the final version to the Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS). On June 30, 2021 the board received the formal approval letter for the plan. The plan is located on the workforce website <https://www.wpcog.org/mission-strategic-plan>.

Staff request the Policy Board to approve the WIOA Summary Plan for program year 2021 – 2022.

Mr. Chip Black made a motion that the Board approve the WIOA Summary Plan for program year 2021-2022 as proposed. Mr. Jerry Hodge offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

Workforce Development Board Appointments

Ms. Johnson requested feedback from the Policy Board concerning appointments to the Workforce Development Board. Workforce Development Board members are appointed and approved by the full WPCOG Policy Board. Currently the Workforce Development board has three vacant private sector seats that need to be filled. One seat is for a Catawba County private sector employer, one is for a Burke County private sector employer, and the third is for Caldwell County private sector. Workforce Development Board members are appointed to serve two-year staggered terms that can begin July 1, or upon new appointment date. This board meets every other month on the fourth Thursday at 8:30 am at the office of WPCOG (or currently meeting virtually). The first Workforce Development Board meeting for any newly appointed members would be August 26, 2021.

Urgent Repair Program Policy Adoption

Sherry Long, Assistant Executive Director and Community & Economic Development Director presented proposed policies for the 2021 Alexander, Burke, and Caldwell County Urgent Repair Program (URP). The Urgent Repair Program is funded through the NC Housing Finance Agency (NCHFA) to provide emergency home repairs for qualified low-income homeowners. The assistance is in the form of a forgivable loan up to \$10,000 per home. The NCHFA requires certain procedures and policies for the grant and these policies require adoption by the Policy Board.

The Assistance Policy explains what the program requirements are and how the program will operate during the cycle of funding. The Procurement & Disbursement Policy provides procurement and disbursement guidelines. Staff requests that the board review and approve the 2021 Alexander, Burke and Caldwell County URP 2021 Assistance Policy and the Procurement & Disbursement Policy.

*I move that the board approve the Alexander, Burke and Caldwell County URP'21 Assistance Policy, and the Procurement & Disbursement Policy as proposed.*

Mr. George Holloman made a motion that the Board approve the Alexander, Burke and Caldwell County URP'21 Assistance Policy, and the Procurement & Disbursement Policy as proposed. Mr. Larry Yoder offered a second. The motion passed unanimously.

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment of the FY 22 Budget

Ms. Andrea Roper, Finance Director, presented the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment of the 2021-2022 Budget reflecting a total budget of \$19,628,080 and an operating budget of \$7,016,879 which represents an increase of \$240,000 from the May 25th, 2021 budget.

The 1st Amendment of the 2021-2022 Budget includes:

- An increase in Aging due to the receipt of a new grant to help with COVID-19 vaccine outreach in our region. A new position has been added, along with an increase in the travel budget to administer the outreach services.
- Aging Special Revenue funds increased \$120,000 to reflect the vaccine outreach grant received.
- Salaries, compensated absences & retirement increased due to the addition of an aging specialist position and other personnel changes.
- Group insurance decreased \$47,705 due to modifications to the health insurance plan and an insurance provider change.
- Rent-Equipment reduced \$20,692 to reflect a \$6,004 savings on a new lease agreement for copier machines. The remaining \$14,688 reduction was allocated to maintenance-equipment for the new copiers.
- Contingency increased \$27,673 due to the new aging grant and other departmental personnel changes.
- OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits) Trust Allocation increased \$56,519 due to the reduction in group insurance costs and additional fringe funds generated by the additional salary amount. This amount will vary depending on the availability of funds throughout the fiscal year
- An increase of \$23,820 to the transfer to capital reserve fund expense line is due to the reduction in the copier lease agreement and additional indirect funds generated by the additional salary amount. This amount will vary depending on the availability of funds throughout the fiscal year.
- There are several new projects expected to finalize in the near future for the planning department. It is possible that one, possibly two, positions will be added to provide services for these anticipated projects.

Staff requested that the Policy Board review and approve the first amendment of the 2021-2022 budget.

Mr. Donald Robinson made a motion that the Policy Board approve the first amendment of the 2021-2022 budget as presented. Mr. Chris Jernigan offered a second. The motion was passed unanimously.

#### WPCOG Assessment & Strategic Plan Update

Mr. Anthony Starr provided an update to the Policy Board on the status of the WPCOG Assessment & Strategic Plan. As previously communicated, the WPCOG initiated a planning process to assess the performance of the organization and to develop goals for a strategic plan. The WPCOG employed the assistance of the SouthEast Regional Directors' Institute to manage the process and write the report.

The process began in June with the distribution of two surveys. One survey was sent to all Policy Board delegates. The second survey was sent to various regional leaders. Both surveys received strong participation and the responses are overwhelmingly positive.

The next phase of the process includes individual stakeholder interviews and focus group meetings. These interviews and meetings are scheduled for the week of August 16th-20th, 2021. A wide variety of participants received invitations for their participation to ensure comprehensive feedback for the process.

The final phase includes a work session with the Policy Board during its regular meeting on September 28th, 2021. We will attempt to minimize the number of other agenda items for that meeting so that the board can devote more time to this important discussion. During that meeting, the SERDI consultants will review the results of the surveys, stakeholder interviews, and focus group meetings, along with any recommendations.

#### Staff Updates

Mr. Anthony Starr reviewed the Executive Director's Report outlining both current and upcoming projects by department.

- WPCOG is assisting Western Piedmont Regional Transit Authority/DBA **Greenway** with their Executive Director Search. Interviews will be scheduled during the month of August.
- WPCOG is assisting **Caldwell County** with their search for a new County Manager. Applications will be accepted through August 6th.
- Community and Economic Development staff are currently administering seventy-five (75) grants for local governments.
- Twenty-seven (27) housing rehabilitations projects are underway.
- The RHA received notice that we have been selected to receive 30 guaranteed Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs) to house individuals and families who are 1) homeless, 2) at risk of homelessness, 3) fleeing, or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking or 4) recently homeless. The RHA was given the opportunity to ask for more and we requested a total of 200 EHV vouchers. The RHA is working closely with the Continuum of Care and the shelter homes in the region to begin using these vouchers. The effective date for these vouchers is July 2021.

#### Adjournment

Chair Floyd reminded the board of the next meeting scheduled for September 28, 2021 and adjourned the meeting at 7:17 pm.